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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SU](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN DISSONANCE ON SUDAN

REF: MOSCOW 619

Classified By: Political M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) FM Lavrov struck a measured tone on Sudan during his March 13 meeting with visiting UK Minister of State for Africa Malloch-Brown, according to a British Emboff. Lavrov said that President Bashir's decision to expel international NGOs in response to the ICC arrest warrant was "unfortunate."

Russia was concerned by the risk of an escalation in tensions in Sudan, and the GOR would do what it could to "calm the situation." Lavrov gave no indication that Russia would send emergency food or medical supplies to Sudan to compensate for the aid that had been provided by the expelled NGOs. In contrast, the Russian President's recently appointed special envoy for Sudan and Chairman of the Federation Council's International Affairs Committee, Mikhail Margelov, has continued to say publicly that Russia was considering sending aid to Sudan (reftel).

¶2. (C) Margelov told Malloch-Brown during their March 12 meeting that he would travel shortly to Khartoum to discuss the situation with the Sudanese government, and intended to deliver the message that the NGO expulsions were a "mistake" that had damaged Khartoum's international standing, according to our British Embassy contact. Margelov also played down his earlier talk of holding an international conference on Sudan in Moscow later this year, telling Malloch-Brown that he only intended this to be an "experts' level" meeting.

¶3. (C) Margelov is currently in the Middle East, where, he told the press, he would visit Lebanon and Qatar to discuss the views of Arab states on the Bashir warrant, among other issues. Margelov has not given any public indication that he intends to travel to Sudan.

BEYRLE